25: Brodrick--95 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 304, 881

"The professing Buddhists of the Laos are tattooed, and, moreover, they are tattooed when they are between thirteen and seventeen years of age, just as are South Sea Islanders. The rite is therefore, clearly a rite de passage, as the French call it, or a puberty ceremony, performed as initiation and as protection, and partly, no doubt, originally as a form of social distinction. The rich man and the powerful man could get more magic protection than his less fortunate fellows, so that, as in ancient New Zealand, some tattooing was confined to chiefs."

moreover, the object of the utmost scorn on the part of the whole population, and their houses are relegated to points outside the muong, that is to say outside the city. 548

No such practice exists in rural areas, and if a few girls grant their lovers great intimacies it is in the hope--a hope which is almost always realized--that marriage will be the result. 836

Death, burial, cremation. In principle, Laotians are supposed to cremate their dead. In this they are obedient to the ancient traditions which specified this ceremony, but since cremation is a costly practice poor people are simply buried. 764 766

In certain cases, as in deaths resulting from dysentery epidemics, from childbirth, from suicide, etc., the bodies are thrown into the river or its tributaries.

Laotians have no cemeteries enclosed by walls or barriers. A corner of the forest near the muong or village is reserved for this use and serves as a last resting place for those of the inhabitants who cannot be cremated or should not be thrown into the water. There, at the foot of the trees and in their shade, repose those adults and adolescents whose families did not even have means to buy the ritual cremation firewood, and also the children who never underwent the operation of "cutting the forelock" (1).

(1) This operation takes place at the age of thirteen and marks the transition from childhood to adolescence. It is the sign of nubility. [881]

When it is to be buried, the body of the dead person is placed in a sort of coffin made of ax-hewn planks which are usually poorly joined and covered with colored paper burdened with ornamentation. Sometimes a mat is used, in simpler fashion, or else lattices made of split and crushed bamboo stalks like those which form the floors of houses. The whole is tied together with rattan or with bamboo bark. 764 792

This is the lot of destiny's outcasts. After a few family ceremonies and a feast given in the dead person's home [201]--the magnitude of which ceremonies and feast vary depending on the dead person's station in life and his family's resources--the bonzes, accompanied by a few pupils, come and recite the funeral orisons.

The bonzes are not supposed to look at the body during their prayers, and they hold up a screen called Talapat to hide their faces.